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(9)

**TOWN OF ACTON**  
472 Main Street  
Acton, Massachusetts, 01720  
Telephone (978) 264-9628  
Fax (978) 264-9630

**Bruce M. Stamski, P.E.**  
**Town Engineer/Director of Public Works**

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October 7, 2005

Board of Selectmen  
Town of Acton  
472 Main Street  
Acton, MA 01720

Re: Recommendation for Advisory Traffic Signs- Musket Drive

Dear Board Members:

In June, responding to concerns of speeding traffic from people in the neighborhood, this office conducted a study of the traffic speed and volume using our automatic traffic counters. The counter was set up for a week long period on Musket Drive between the intersections with Revolutionary Road and Jefferson Drive. We found that 50% +/- of the vehicles were exceeding the 30 mph speed limit. The 30 mph speed limit is, under Massachusetts Speed Zoning Laws, the "prima facie" speed limit in Thickly Settled Areas. With this evidence in hand, it is my engineering judgment that prudent and reasonable drivers are not sufficiently warned of the thickly settled nature of this area. I recommend a Thickly Settled Advisory Sign be installed on Musket Drive between the intersection with Main Street and the intersection with John Swift Road.

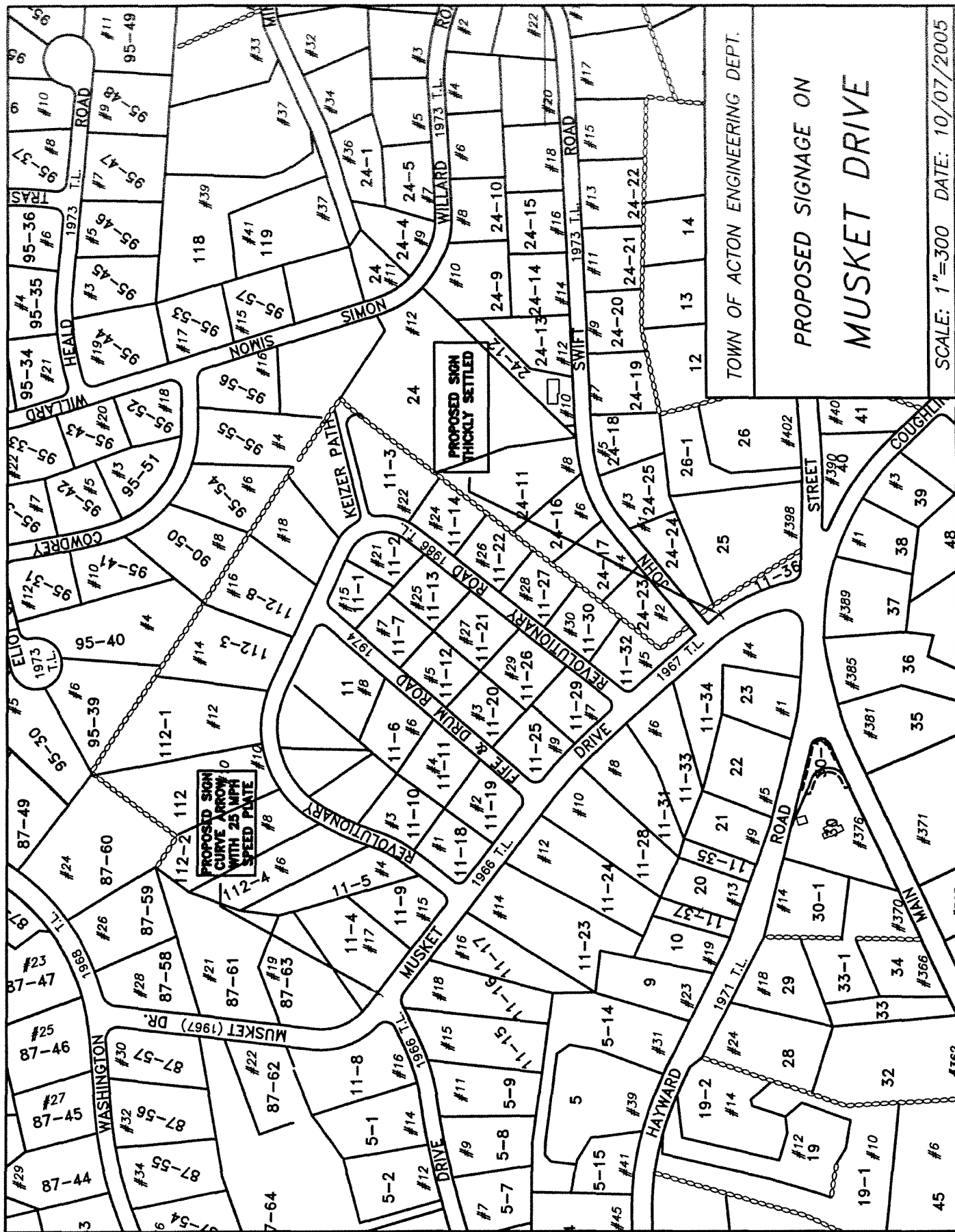
A meeting was held on September 20, 2005 with several neighbors to discuss traffic problems and to seek ways to make the area safer for pedestrians. Of major concern was the speed of the traffic at the curve in the road between Jefferson and Washington. The neighborhood pool is located here and lots of children are walking to and from the pool. Massachusetts Speed Zoning Laws recognize small stretches of roadways within a speed zone may have less than desirable conditions and that warning signs with advisory speed plates indicating the safe speed can be installed. To determine a safe speed in this area I had people from the Fire Dept, Planning Dept, Engineering Dept. and Building Dept. drive this section of road. All determined a reasonable and safe speed to be in the vicinity of 25mph. It is my engineering judgment that a curve warning sign with an advisory speed plate of 25mph should be erected on Musket Drive across from the intersection with Jefferson Drive.

The recommended advisory signs above do not need State approval and are not adopted in the Traffic Rules and Orders. As stated at the September 20, 2005 meeting, this office will continue to investigate other methods to improve the pedestrian safety in the area.

Sincerely,

  
Bruce M. Stamski, P.E.

Cc  
Police Dept.



TOWN OF ACTON ENGINEERING DEPT.

PROPOSED SIGNAGE ON  
MUSKET DRIVE

SCALE: 1"=300 DATE: 10/07/2005

**Bruce Stamski**

**From:** Michael Lynch [MLYNCH@MHLAW.com]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, October 11, 2005 3:18 PM  
**To:** 'Tom Melander'; Highway Department  
**Cc:** Manager Department  
**Subject:** RE: Musket Drive

I returned home last night after being away during the days of deluge and in the darkness plunged into one of those unmarked massive potholes. This has become an outrage. Paving takes place all over town all year. Why can't this small stretch of road be finished??????

Michael G. Lynch  
47 Washington Drive

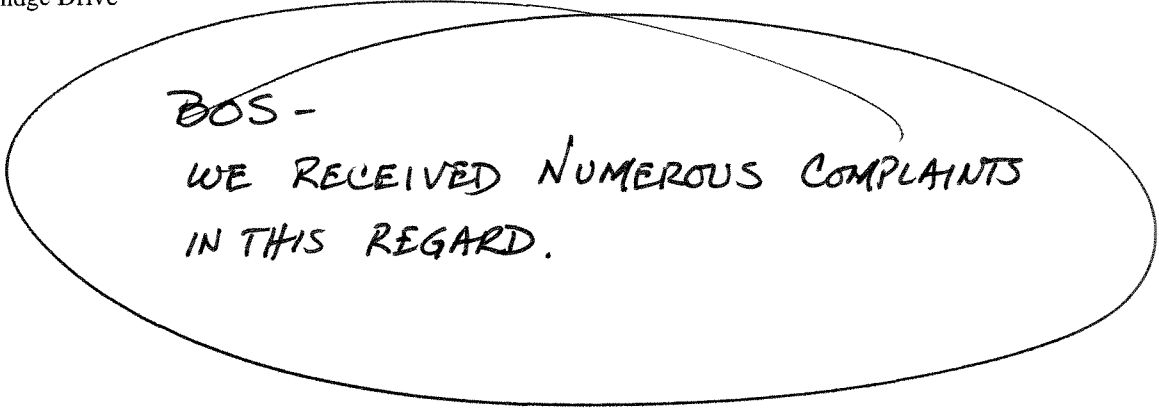
**From:** Tom Melander [mailto:tommelande@hotmail.com]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, October 11, 2005 2:26 PM  
**To:** highway@acton-ma.gov  
**Cc:** manager@acton-ma.gov  
**Subject:** Musket Drive

I left my house on Coolidge Drive this afternoon around 1:15. There was a steady, heavy stream of traffic going both directions on Musket Drive and Jefferson Drive between Main Street and Hayward Road. It turned out there was a bad accident on Main between Musket and Hayward, and all traffic was being detoured off Main Street.

At that moment, a Highway Department crew arrived to fill in the potholes that have developed on Musket in the nearly 5 weeks that have lapsed since Musket was grooved for re-paving. Should we taxpayers assume, after this unacceptable lapse, that the cost for the project has risen unnecessarily, because time and materials are needed to fill the potholes that developed due to the town's disregard?

The crew was having a tough time getting into the road to make the fixes because it was so clogged with detour traffic, and it was raining torrentially. I wanted to feel sorry for the crew, but instead I found myself thinking their dilemma was justice for the unreasonable and unexplained month-plus that the town has not returned to pave Musket. To be fair, my displeasure should be directed to the Highway Dept management, not the crewmen.

Sincerely,  
Thomas E. Melander  
12 Coolidge Drive



BOS -  
WE RECEIVED NUMEROUS COMPLAINTS  
IN THIS REGARD.

September 13, 2005

Mr. Peter Ashton  
Chairman  
Board of Selectman  
Acton, MA 01720

Dear Peter,

I hope you and your family have had a nice summer and that the return to the school routine has gone well for all.

I am writing because there is concern in my neighborhood over the excessive speed of cars on Musket Drive. It has been suggested by the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) that we contact you in the hope of scheduling a meeting, as soon as possible, to address the issue.

Jack and I have lived at 22 Musket Drive for ten years (and at 10 Lincoln Drive for the prior three years.) Each summer when the Patriots Hill Pool is open, directly across the street from our house, we worry about the likelihood of a car hitting a child. This year our worry has intensified. I am not exaggerating when I say I have been horrified by the speed of cars and the very real chance (and that's all it will be – a chance meeting, ill fated timing) that a child will be struck down by a careless, speeding driver.

Dozens of children per day, from mid June to mid September, come and go from the pool – on bikes, in strollers, on foot, dragging towels, pulled in wagons, distracted by the ice-cream truck, navigating cars parked along the side of the road. And, in that scenario, all day long, drivers fly down Musket Drive, heedless of the danger. I've called the police to voice my concern several times. Their response is sympathetic and effective on the occasions that they have sent an officer and cruiser to monitor the street. They suggest I write to Officer McGowan, the Safety Officer.

Until a week ago, I thought I was the only one worrying about the potential danger. However, early last week a neighbor left a message on my answering machine asking if Jack and I might attend a meeting scheduled for tonight in Town Hall, Room 126. As described in the message, members of TAC would talk with residence of the neighborhood and help determine a solution.

I attended the meeting. Thirteen people in total were present from Patriots Hill and four members of TAC attended.

At the meeting, I realized that at least one neighbor in particular, Pam Winters, has been more diligent than I, as she has been in contact for months on a regular basis with the office of Bruce Stamski, Director of the Department of Public Works.

Pamela Winters also had study results from a recent measure of the number of cars that travel Musket Drive per day and the speed of 85% of the drivers. While she has the exact figures available, I believe I am correct in saying that more than 1500 cars travel the road per day and the speed of 85% of the drivers is 35–37 miles per hour. Another point of interest is that the street is 30 feet wide, rather than the standard 24. Additionally, no speed limit is posted nor does the street have any lines. It is a wide, long, downward ride with no parameters to guide the driver's behavior.

Yesterday, coincidentally, Musket Drive was 'torn up' in preparation for repaving. It seems that had the neighborhood received advance notice, plans could have been made to design the newly paved road to diminish reckless driving, or for 'traffic calming', a term I learned tonight. There are various solutions to discourage speeding or to calm traffic. Some are quite simple and appear to be not expensive.

Many ideas toward that end were discussed tonight. As the meeting wound down, TAC suggested that the folks here, in and around Musket Drive, contact you and ask that you meet with us, Bruce, members of TAC, Officer McGowan and perhaps Garry Rhodes and Lauren Rosenzweig and any other parties who could add value to a discussion that would result in repaving, rebuilding, redesigning, re-lining (to include carefully placed crosswalks) Musket Drive as the work on it is completed in the next week.

The key in all of this is to be thoughtful. All 'solutions' must be well thought out so as to result in the desired affect – speed reduction. For instance does adding lines actually increase speed – psychologically, to a driver, has a country road now become a busy street? Does posting a 30 MPH sign suggest drivers pass through at 35 MPH, an unacceptable speed? What responsibility does the Patriots Hill Recreation Club have to post the presence of the pool?

Our hope is that by bringing various parties together, all angles of thought might have light shed on them and the best solutions realized.

Thank you for your attention to this letter. I look forward to hearing from you with suggestions of times that you are available to meet with residents of Acton who are very concerned for the safety of their own and their neighbor's children here in Patriots Hill.

Peter, let's call this "Operation, A Stitch in Time".

Sincerely,

Mary McAvoy  
22 Musket Drive  
263-8760  
marymcavoy@comcast.net

cc: Leslie Mulcahy, Patriots Hill Recreation Club, Board President  
TAC  
Pamela Winters

**To:** John Murray, Town Manager  
**From:** Residents of Patriot Hill Musket Drive neighborhood  
**Date:** Tuesday September 20, 2005  
**Subject:** Request for accommodations to reduce vehicle speed on Musket Drive

Please consider the following justifications and recommendations:

I. Justification

A. Background information:

- Musket has no posted speed limit, so the speed limit by default is 30 mph.
- Similar neighborhood streets in the area with posted speed limits are 20 mph at Mohawk and 25 mph at Minuteman and Joseph Reed.
- Musket Drive goes down a hill and around a curve at the same location that another street (Jefferson Drive) intersects on the outer edge of the curve. Vehicles are traveling in excess of 30 mph with no clear view due to the road curvature.
- It must also be stated that the neighborhood has experienced an increase in the number of homes due to new development and a rather large turnover of owners, where the newer owners often have young children. Therefore, rather recently there is a considerably higher population traveling by vehicle, foot, and bicycle along Musket Drive.
- In addition, Musket Drive is one of the roads that connects Newtown Road to Route 2 and the AB school complex.

B. Traffic Study Findings:

- See attached files for traffic study results performed by Acton Engineering Department from June 15<sup>th</sup> to June 23<sup>rd</sup>. Points of interest include:
- There are 1526 to 1630 vehicles traveling on Musket Drive per weekday
- Vehicle speed maximum was recorded between 51 – 55 mph
- 59.3% of the vehicles driving towards Washington Street were above the speed limit of 30 mph (3,200 vehicles)
- 5,561 vehicles traveling on Musket in each direction were above the speed limit of 30 mph

C. Recorded Problem

- Accidents have occurred on Musket Drive at the curve in recent years. The most serious was a speeding vehicle that lost control at the curve and hit a tree on the opposite side of the street. It took quite a long time for the emergency personnel to remove the injured driver from the demolished car.

- On another occasion, residents of 22 Musket Drive found gouges across their front lawn, left by a vehicle that had lost control at the curve during the night.

There have been other incidents as well, and numerous near misses, including:

- Vehicles on Revolutionary Road turning onto Musket
- Musket Drive vehicles entering/exiting driveways
- Musket Drive residents trying to get their mail from their mailboxes
- Many pedestrians and bicyclists, including children, are on Musket because there is a Pool (Patriot Hill Recreation Club), and Musket is in close proximity to the AB High School, AB Junior High School, and Merriam and McCarthy-Towne Elementary Schools.

## II. Recommendations

Utilize known effective Traffic Calming techniques.

1. Lower and post speed limit to 25 mph on Musket Drive, with police enforcement. Post signs at entrance to Musket Drive at Route 27 which reads "25 mph", and directly across the street a second sign to read "Speed limit enforced".
2. Sidewalks along the entire length of Musket Drive on both sides.
3. Crosswalks on Musket Drive at:
  - John Swift
  - Revolutionary (closest to Main St)
  - Jefferson
  - Patriot's Hill Recreation Club
4. Place crosswalk marker in center of crosswalk at Jefferson
5. Three-way stops at:
  - Musket/Revolutionary intersection (closest to Main St)
  - Musket/Jefferson intersection
6. Sign just before curve at Jefferson to read "Reduce Speed Curve"
7. One sidewalk along Jefferson closest to Washington Drive, to align with the crosswalk at the Hayward Rd. sidewalk/crosswalk.
8. White lines on either side of Musket to delineate bicycle lanes (this has the added advantage making the vehicle lanes narrower, which is a proven traffic calming technique).

Also discussed at the meeting with TAC last Tuesday was the idea of an island placed at the Musket Drive/Jefferson Drive intersection as a visually attractive speed deterrent.